

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

APRIL 1985

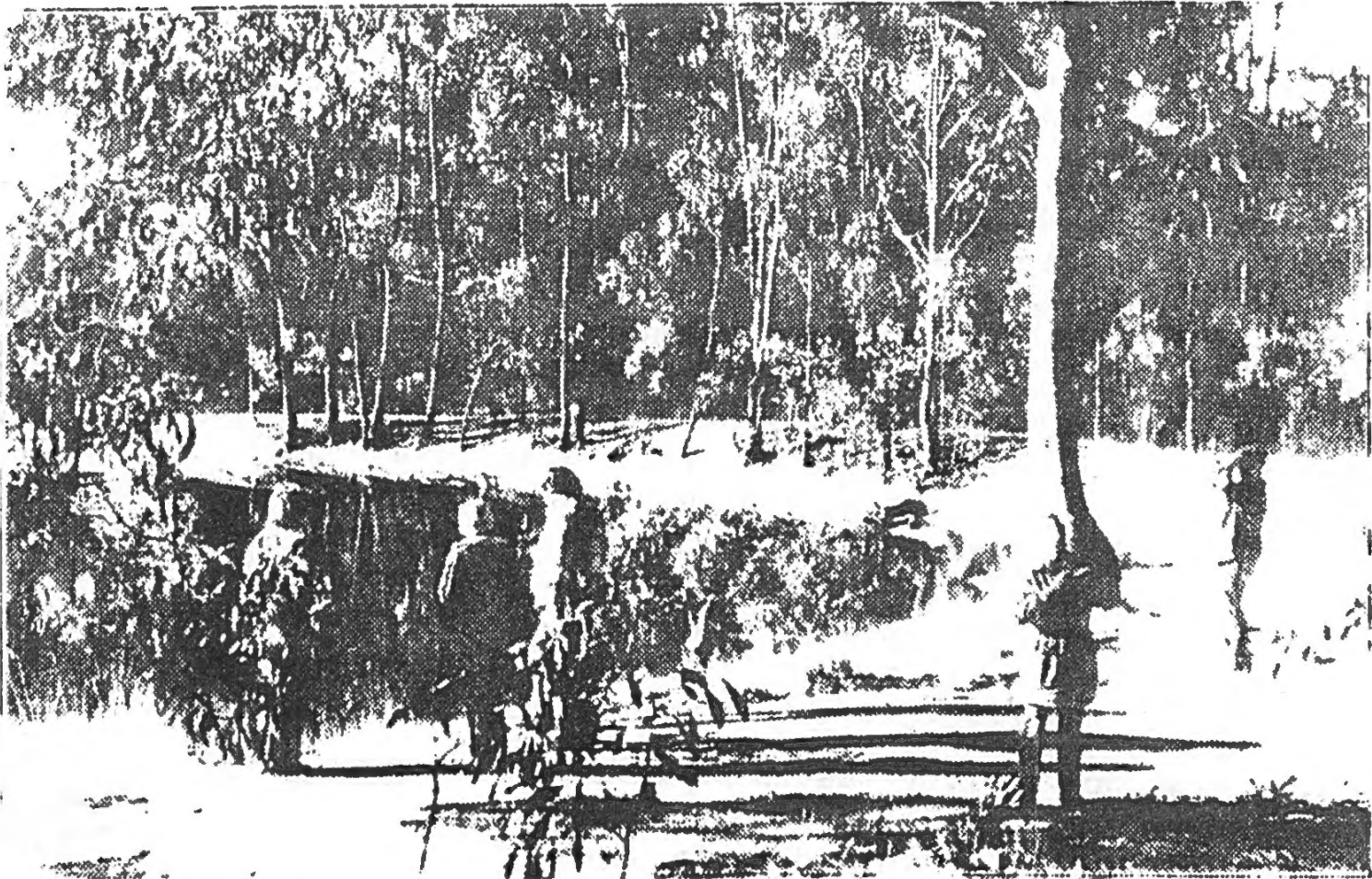
Vol. 10 #3

Our 100th issue.

100



Owlet Nightjar p.4



(Club members enjoying an outing to the Muckleford Forest, 1984

President: Mr John Dare Ph. 76 4227
Secretary: Mrs Beres Perry Ph. 73 4240

NEW The club now has its own P.O. box. It is No. 324 Castlemaine
Meetings: Held on the second Friday of each month, except January
at the Castlemaine High School, Lawson Parade. (Up behind the hospital)
Meetings commence 8 p.m. Visitors are very welcome.

SUPERSTITIONS No 1.

Taken from our old English Ancestors whose folk magic must have played a large part in their daily lives. Of course a Castlemaine Field Naturalist would never believe in these omens, -- or would they? Some are nice but others scary.

SPIDERS : Nicer than they look and almost always bring good fortune. Friendly and must not be killed. A spider indoors means lots of happiness and if it falls on you better luck still. So, "If you wish to live and thrive, let a spider run alive".

RITA REMINISCES

Some memories of Club outings, by Rita Mills

Over the years with the Club I have enjoyed many outings. Always being in the company of people who enjoy the same interests helps add to that enjoyment, and being with people whose knowledge helps add to mine, and vice-versa adds to the pleasure, but there are some outstanding memories amongst those times.

One outing was to Glenluce, and, after driving through acres of Mat Pea and Mitchell Wattle and wandering around the bush at that spot, we turned back and went along the Wewak track toward Porcupine Ridge road, stopping on the way for afternoon tea in a pleasant wide gully. I wandered off down the gully and again heard the 'baa-ing' I'd heard earlier in the afternoon. It wasn't sheep in the bush as I'd thought earlier, but a Forrester doe telling the buck to 'get lost'. They spotted me and the whole mob moved off. Later I'd wandered off down to the end of the gully again, and this time heard a rather broken booming roar. This time it was the buck. Gordon Grant chipped me for taking rather a risk, but the whole mob had only moved off again, this time for good. A couple of people I've spoken to have heard this sound from the buck. but it seems I'm one of only few who have. I was told that this is where they get the name of "Boomer"

A very strenuous outing was to Barfold Gorge to see the organ pipe columns and waterfall - which we didn't reach because the river was just too high, though we walked to it along the top after a stiff climb out. It was there we saw the rare anchor plant and some lovely red gums. Sight of the day though was the strange cloud formations to the South-west. Little did we know we were watching the tornado that devastated so much of Sandon.

After the bushfires at the end of '78 we decided to go out to the Muckleford forest to see the extent of the damage, and to check on any regeneration. All the Sticky Boronia had gone, but a few ground orchids had struggled through, but it was all very sad, until we stopped just at the edge of the blackened area. I spotted a hollow in a tree, and as is my habit, focussed the

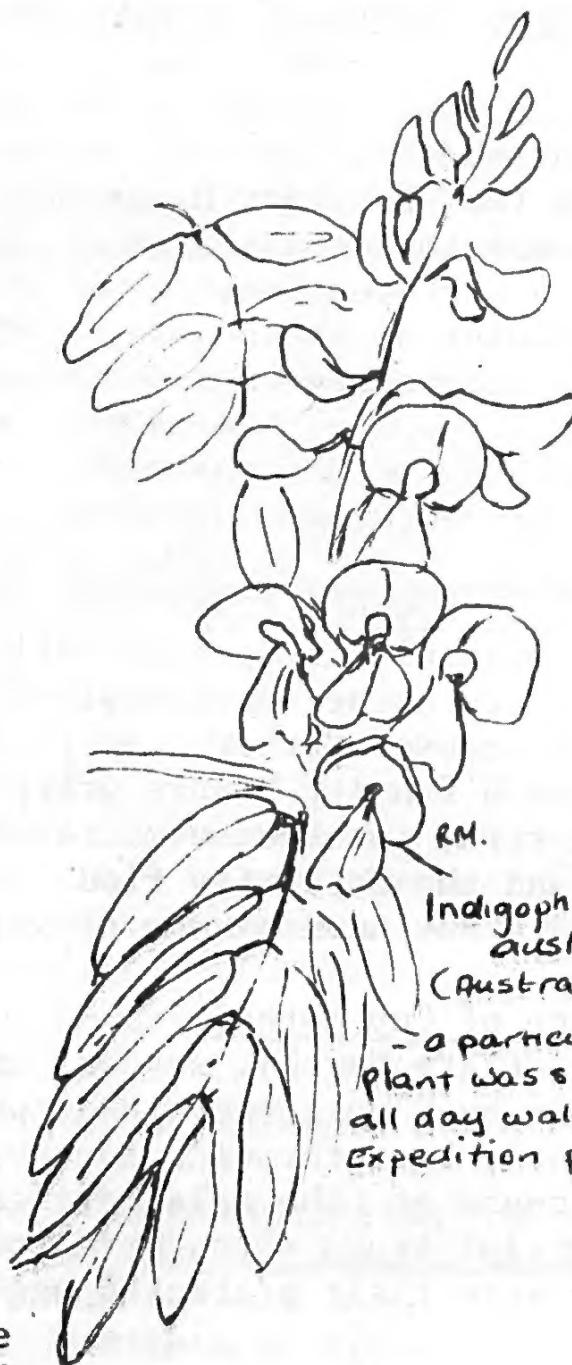


binoculars on the hole "just in case", and there was a dear little face watching me intently - a Sugar Glider. The group watched them for perhaps ten minutes as the family of three flitted up and down past the hole, or paused to look out, sometimes two at a time, to see what we were up to.

The all-day walks have always been a highlight. Often there hasn't been a lot out, and a couple of years have been dry, but the walk along the Maldon Railway line turned up some real treasures, especially as far as where the line leaves the Smith's Reef bush, and again almost into Castlemaine where we saw masses of White Helipterum growing on and beside the tracks.

The club has had a couple of campouts, one of which I "lead". There was another which I missed. The first one to the Grampians was in the first year of the club, and was very successful, with a number of adults and children attending. Best thing of the trip as far as the older children were concerned was the number of Shingle-backed lizards which were nursed.

The trip to Wychitella had a number of highlights, including me getting everyone rather lost in thick Melaleuca scrub when we looking for a Mallee Fowl nest. We got there later with the help of the chap who had drawn the map I had tried to follow! The flowers in the area were a delight, especially the Showy Phebalium, *P. obcordatum*, on the walking track at Wychitella and the wax (*Eriostemon difformis*) and hundreds of pink and blue Caladenias, (*C. carnea* and *coerulea*) out on the road to Nine Mile, where we also had a good look at an Echidna.



RM.
Indigophera australis.
(Austral Indigo)
- a particularly Showy plant was seen on the all day walk to Expedition pass.

On the way home on the Monday via Melville Caves, only the Harrises and ourselves were left of the party to see a flock of nine young Grass Whistle-ducks in the middle of the road. We sat there in the two cars, side by side in the road! Just as well there was no traffic and watched them preening and stretching for a good five minutes, while the parents zoomed across the road a good hundred yards away, obviously rather anxious.

There have been lots of other highlights, like outings to the Engine Dam (now dry), with microscopes and dipnets, finding all sorts of plants that haven't appeared for years where the pine plantation has been cut out, watching an Owllet Nightjar while it stared at us, and a Yellow-tufted Honeyeater gathering material for a nest. I could go on and on but I won't. I just hope I've whetted the appetites of those who haven't yet been out with us, or who haven't been for a while.

Some Nature Observations

by Barbara Maunder

Were you invited ?

Did you know that Saturday March 30 at 12.30 p.m. was the occasion of the (annual ?) Knotweed feast held in Castlemaine at which many starlings and sparrows were greedy guests ?



Narrow escape of Lepidopteran

Rita M.

Noticing a Buddleia tip persistently fluttering we approached cautiously from some distance expecting a bird to be the cause. Rather? Instead it was a Praying Mantis grappling manfully (?) with a butterfly. Detaching the spray to observe matters more closely, the Mantis' grip was loosened and the butterfly fled. (Perhaps it did not have a very pleasing flavour. Ed)

Evidence of Cup Moths

This morning, (late March), several small brown mouldy patches were observed on the back verandah window panes. As children in the nearby lane had recently been throwing rotten apples about it was assumed that this was the cause of the splatterings. On closer inspection several stocky nondescript brown moths were found on the window ledges and the furry patches were their protected egg clusters.

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 Yellow-tailed thornbill rw 17

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The Month at Campbells Creek

by Terry Collins

Preceding a slight weather change on Feb 22, a flock of about 50 Fork-tailed Swifts appeared above our area wheeling in crazy patterns for hours. They appeared daily until March 7th, when apparently they were gone on their migratory trek. Quite interesting to wonder how many Kms they must do each hour in their aerial displays.

Our Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes also disappeared about mid-March, and according to my bird chart will return 10-14 Sept. Accidentally knocked a parrot nesting box and out came a lovely Sugar Glider; probably they have taken over all the other hollows. During the hot spell we were visited by dozens of various small birds between 5-6 p.m. flying in from the West straight to our bird bath. A quick drink and then off again. A first to our garden was a Striated Thornbill. Just two or three at the bird bath. For years I have tried to track down a bird with a monotonous call. Never a sight, always keeping just so far ahead in the trees. Finally I have up in disgust but with the sprinkler going under a low spreading Claret Ash and one hot day while watching all the birds hopping into the spray I heard the call up in the top canopy. Then staying hidden, this little bird kept calling and then hopped right down still calling into the spray. Mystery solved - a Spotted Pardelote.

Our Bronze-wing Pigeons now eat small amounts of Parrot seed from a tray and are nesting. One pair have a nest about 25 feet up in a fork of a Gum Tree. How they manage to sit on the few sticks which they call a nest is a wonder. Another pair nested low down in a Cypress but I found the nest and broken eggs on the ground plus a few feathers. Probably a cat just missed Mother but smashed the nest.

No need to worry about the lizards. A very young Blue-tongue has arrived in the wooden steps going up to the shed. Comes out daily and we feed him every second day. One of biggest and fattest Shingle-back paid a visit to the garden so that means the three types are still around.

Plantwise, still nothing to report of note except a few Grevilleas are showing small buds and a Banksia has numerous candles nearing maturity. Good news for the Honey-eaters as we fill the bird bottle every second day. During a discussion last week somebody mentioned Sky-larks. Hve we any around this area? I rmemeber their beautiful song while hovering about 100 feet up. That is going back in time to the 1930's, around Sale and Rochester.

OUR ONE HUNDREDTH ISSUE

In our first issue in April 1976, it is recorded that it was decided to produce a news sheet on trial. Now here we are 99 issues later with the cost of membership having risen by \$1 to \$4 still trying to produce a news sheet every month. Unfortunately printing costs have not remained at the 1976 level of 4 cents, being now more like 20 cents per copy.

In a report on the first club outing, to Basalt, it was stated that the area would be well worth a return visit, in Spring. Perhaps it is time we considered making that return visit.

To mark the occasion of our 100th, Ern perkins has with the aid of his computer, prepared for us an index of our first 99 issues. I am sure that you too will be impressed as I was by the range of articles and the number of contributors we have had over the 9 years of publication. Many thanks to all those who have contributed, and to those who are about to

DO YOU WANT BACK ISSUES?

Possibly 4 or 5 club members have complete sets of the club newsletter, as has the TAFE library (Tech College, Lyttleton St). Issues still in print are

Numbers 40-100. All except 42,46,62. Only one copy of number 91 is left.

For the earlier issues, copies of the following are still available.

1,10,12,13,17,19,20,25,26,27,30,32,33,34,35,36,38.

If you need some of the out of print issues to complete your set, photocopying can be arranged.

The club does not have a set of its own magazine! Perhaps we should collect a set, and have the set bound.

More Superstitions

FERNS : Most ferns are associated with thunder and lightning and if hung around the house will protect it from storms and tempests. You must be careful not to burn a fern or uproot a clump or this could cause storms and heavy rain. In Ireland ferns are said to be flowerless because St Patrick put a curse on them.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. AGENDA

Friday 12 April. BIRDS. Speaker is Ellen McCulloch, from Bird Observers Club. 8 p.m. at High School, Room 309

Sat 13 April. YANDOIT Excursion to the Cox Property. Leader is Kaye Turner. Meet S.E.C. at 1.30 sharp..

Sun 14 April. GLENLUCE-TARILTA to see large reefs, with Maryborough F,N.C. Meet SEC, Mosyn St at 1.35 or Guildford Store at 2.00 p.m.

Sat/Sun 20-21 April. PRINCETON. Western Victoria F.N.C. Association Campout at 'Kangarooobie', Princeton. Excursions to Pt Campbell, Melba Gully and Glow Worms, Princeton Swamp etc. Brochure available.

Friday 10 May. DEVIL'S KITCHEN, By W. Day, Ballarat C.A.E. High School at 8 p.m.

Sat 11 May DEVIL'S KITCHEN, via Ballarat Leave 10 a.m. from SEC, Mostyn St.

Frid 14 June. MR ALLAN HARTUP will be guest speaker.

Sat 15 June. MELBOURNE ZOO All day bus trip.

Fri 22 July DR E. PETERS - POND LIFE

August. BENDIGO -W.V.F.N.C.A campout.

Sat 10 Aug. MELVILLE CAVES- all day

Fri 13 Sept WILDFLOWERS - tba.

Sat 14 Sept WILDFLOWER EXCURSION

Fri/Sat/Sun 13-15 October. COLAC - W.V.F.N.C.A. Campout.

Sun 20 Oct. BENDIGO WHIPSTICK - all day excursion with Maryborough F.N.C.

Sat 9 Nov. Excursion with Bird Observers Club..

Feb 1986. Bendigo Settling Ponds, with Maryborough F.N.C.

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